



City of Peoria

First District Façade Improvement Program

Program Purpose and Benefits

The Façade Improvement Program (the “Program”) provides the use of public funds to leverage private investment for exterior façade improvements to properties located within City of Peoria areas of focus as outlined below:

Southern Gateway: Commercial, industrial or mixed-use properties along Adams or Washington Streets from Western Avenue southwest to the City Limits.

Western Avenue: Properties on Western Avenue, south of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Drive

Program Timeline

Qualified applicants are encouraged to apply as soon as possible. The program guidelines may change **August 1, 2014**. All applicants are encouraged to contact the Community Development Department at 494-8600 to discuss their project.

Program’s Goals

The Program is intended to encourage owners and business tenants of existing properties to restore or renovate their buildings, in order to improve the area’s physical character and enhance the aesthetics of the commercial environment.

Project Eligibility

In order to apply, all of the following conditions must be met:

- Property must be within one of the targeted areas and within the City of Peoria City limits;
- Payment of all property taxes and/or assessments, general and special, must be current;
- Property must be zoned for and operate under commercial, mixed-use or industrial;
- Applicant must make a financial commitment of a least \$500 or 50% of project costs, whichever is greater, prior to any participation by the City;
- Neither the owner of record, the occupants nor any of either’s principals may be in default of any obligations to the City of Peoria;
- Projects must focus on the exterior façade of the building and be a visual improvement;
- Improvements must comply with all City of Peoria zoning and building code requirements and must in all instances be initiated and done only pursuant to any and all applicable permitting as required by the City of Peoria’s ordinances.
- Any outstanding zoning or building code violations must be corrected at the completion of the project, before reimbursement will occur.

Project eligibility will be determined by City of Peoria Community Development Department staff, who will also issue a recommendation for approval or denial. Final approval will be granted by City Council. Project applications will be reviewed and considered on a “first come- first served” basis. Those business occupants who are **tenants** of commercial, mixed-use or industrial buildings in the area are also eligible to participate in the Façade Improvement Program, if the property owner’s consent is in writing (Form B1 or B2).

The applicant must obtain and attach to the application no less than two written cost estimate for improvements to be performed from licensed¹ contractors. The City of Peoria reserves the right to request additional contractor estimates.

If the façade improvements are within the capabilities of the property owner, then work may be completed by the owner. Business tenants are also eligible to complete the property's façade improvement. However, if the tenant performs the work, the tenant must obtain the property owner's written consent for façade improvements, financial assistance and compliance. (Form B3 or B4). If either the property owner or tenants are completing the work without a contractor, only the cost of the materials is an eligible reimbursable cost. In either case in which the property owner or business tenant is completing the façade improvements, no less than one written cost estimate from another licensed contractor must be submitted and attached to final application, regardless of improvement costs. Restrictions presently or subsequently determined by Community Development Staff, and/or City Council in its sole and exclusive discretion, may apply depending on the type of façade improvements proposed.

To be eligible for grant assistance for rear entrance improvements to a building, the project must also meet all of the following criteria in addition to the foregoing:

- a) The building must have an existing rear entrance or a location for a new rear entrance accessible to the public from a dedicated public street, alley or other right of way, or from a parking lot or walkway owned or leased by the City or from other property that is encumbered by an easement granting public pedestrian access;
- b) The rear entrance must provide public access to a business or businesses within the building.

Grant assistance is available for a side of a given property if the side of the property, to include the proposed façade improvements, is visible from a main street within the façade improvement area.

Eligible Improvements

The following list contains eligible improvements which may be included under the Façade Improvement Program for grant assistance:

- *Exit Doors (exterior)*: Installation, repair and/or replacement of exit doors and hardware to provide public access, or where current doors do not meet the building or fire codes or it will improve the overall appearance of the building;
- *Painting*: Painting of the exterior surface of building;
- *Fencing*: Decorative fencing for pedestrian plazas or courtyards;
- *Facia/Gutters/Downspouts*: Replacement or repair of facia, gutters and downspouts;
- *Shutters/Awnings/Canopies*: Repair, replace or addition of exterior shutters, awnings or canopies;
- *Signs*: New, repair, replacement or removal of exterior signage;
- *Stairs, Porches, Railings, Exits*: Repair, replacement or installation of exterior stairs, porches, railings and exit facilities;
- *Walls*: Repair or rebuilding of exterior walls, including cleanings (wall and/or brick), sealing, painting, etc.;
- *Windows*: Repair of frames, sills, replacement of glass and installation of new windows;

¹ The City of Peoria does not require licensing for general contractors, however, the following types of contractor(s) and/or subcontractor(s) require licensing: electrical, heating and cooling, sidewalk and driveway, parking lot paving, sewer connector and house mover.

- *Roofs:* Repair and/or re-roofing where the effects of the repair will be visible from a public street or public parking lot;
- *Walkways:* Restoration or replacement of deteriorated or hazardous sidewalks, pavers, plazas or other permanent improvements designed primarily for pedestrian use;
- *Lighting:* Repair, replacement or installation of exterior building and sign lighting;
- *Landscaping:* Limited to perennial plantings, such as trees and shrubs; construction of planter or window boxes permanently affixed to the building is included;
- *Removal of materials:* Removal of any inappropriate or incompatible exterior finishes and materials.
- *Aluminum or Vinyl Siding:* Installation, repair and/or replacement of aluminum or vinyl siding.

Architectural costs incurred in the project’s design are eligible for grant assistance not to exceed \$1,000 to any particular property through the Façade Improvement Program.

The following list contains items NOT eligible for grant assistance through the Façade Improvement Program under any circumstances whatsoever:

- Building permits fees and related costs;
- Title reports and legal fees;
- Extermination of insects, rodents, vermin and other pests;
- Private sidewalk replacement or repair except as specified in the eligible improvements;
- Acquisition of land or buildings;
- Refinancing of existing debt;
- Air conditioning and/or heating facilities;
- Plumbing;
- Sprinkler systems- interior and exterior;
- Building security systems- interior and exterior;
- Electrical wiring or service upgrade, except electrical work necessary to illuminate an eligible sign;
- Elevator repair or installation;
- Interior floor, wall, flooring and/or ceiling replacement or repair;
- Working capital for businesses;
- General repair/maintenance work not contributing to the overall exterior impact of the building.
- “Sweat equity” work performed by the applicant, family members of the applicant or employees of the applicant, unless the work is done as an agent of a construction company which has provided a quote included in the original application and recommended for approval by Community Development Staff and approved by City Council.
- General construction oversight and project administration work performed by the applicant, family members of the applicant or employees of the applicant are not eligible;

Improvements not specifically listed as eligible or ineligible are subject to review as to their eligibility or ineligibility by City Council in its sole and exclusive discretion.

Funding

Property or business owners who install no less than \$1,000 of improvements are eligible to receive a grant to reimburse 50% of total project costs or \$5,000, whichever is less.

Approval of Façade Program Applications

Interested applicants whose project would meet the Program's requirements should contact Community Development Staff at 309-494-8600 or at City Hall, Room 300 to receive and complete an application. Community Development Staff will review the application to ensure program compliance. Submitted applications will be reviewed on a first come-first serve basis. It is **required** that the applicant attend the City of Peoria One-Stop Shop Meeting, prior to or after submitting the application to Community Development Staff, to discuss the proposed façade improvements.²

If an application is denied by Community Development Staff, the specific reasons for denial will be conveyed to the applicant in writing. In the event the application is denied and/or re-denied, the property owner and/or business tenant is solely responsible for all costs associated with submitting the application. Denial and/or re-denial are in the sole and exclusive discretion of Community Development Staff, and/or the City Council.

Application items include:

- Completed application form;
- Proof of property ownership (e.g. deed, title search, etc.) or written owner's consent and appropriate proof of that owner's ownership, if applicable;
- Proof of property/liability insurance;
- Site plan with elevations showing proposed improvements drawn to scale;
 - If proposed improvements, however, are to replace or maintain existing conditions, material descriptions and photographs are acceptable.
- Construction plan with materials, schedule and dimensions;
- Two attached contractor bids or one contractor bid if the work is to be completed by property owner or business tenant;
- Final written cost estimates and name of the licensed contractor(s) chosen to perform the work;
- Copy of written contract(s) with contractor(s) if applicable;
- Landscape plan, if applicable;
- Signage plan, if applicable.

It is recommended that applicants retain the services of a registered architect or similarly qualified design professional to prepare plans, drawings and construction specifications for their entire project as needed for the application. However, only fees for services provided by a registered design professional will be eligible to be included in the Façade Improvement Program reimbursement funds.

Community Development Staff will review the Final Application for completeness and compliance and will make a project recommendation. Community Development Staff's recommendation shall be issued in writing and state the reason(s) for approval or rejection to the City Council. If approval is requested it must be presented to the City Council for final approval and allocation of funds.

Project Award

Following the review and approval of the application by the City Council, the applicant will receive and sign a Letter of Commitment stating the reimbursement grant amount, terms of the improvements, conditions for construction and any other provisions related to the project. The Letter of Commitment must be signed by the applicant and executed within 15 calendar days of the

² The City of Peoria One-Stop Shop Meeting is held every Monday at 1:30 pm in City Hall, Room 404. For more information, please call (309) 494-8600.

notification of the award. The applicant can then obtain the necessary building permits and any other applicable review processes. Community Development Staff and the City Council reserve the right to request a copy of the building permit from the applicant at any time during project construction. The Letter of Commitment, once signed, can be taken to bank to aid in securing additional financing if needed.

Applicants should NOT start improvements before he/she receives notification of approval by the City Council, the Letter of Commitment is signed and building permits are issued! Any work performed, materials purchased or contracts entered into prior to approval and a completed Letter of Commitment will NOT be eligible for grant assistance.

Enterprise Zone

In conjunction with the City's grant and loan assistance, some of the properties that are eligible for the façade improvement program are also located within the Enterprise Zone. The financial incentive specifically available for façade improvement projects is the Building Materials Sales Tax Exemption. Sales tax will be waived on building materials purchased for use in properties located in the Enterprise Zone, provided a State and City processes have been completed. Contact ShamRa Robinson at 494-8922 to learn more about this process. Building materials can be used for remodeling, rehabilitation or new construction. Building materials are considered to be any items permanently affixed to real property. 100% of the 8.25% sales tax is waived.

Construction

After the Letter of Commitment has been executed, applicant may award the construction contract and secure all necessary construction permits, if applicable. Applicant must notify Community Development Staff of the construction start date and apply for a building permit within 30 calendar days of executing the Letter of Commitment. Construction must be completed within 180 calendar days (or as otherwise determined) upon notification to Community Development Staff of construction commencement.

The City of Peoria will not be responsible in any manner whatsoever for the selection of a contractor. An applicant shall be responsible for determining contractor qualifications, quality of work and professional reputation. The applicant will bear full responsibility for reviewing the competence and abilities of prospective contractors and secure proof of their licensing and insurance coverage. No employee of the City of Peoria may refer, recommend, not recommend or in any other way be involved in the selection of any contractor by owner and/or tenant.

Modifications to the approved final plans or changes to the construction documents which produce visible differences in the previously approved application and its façade design (such as changes in exterior materials or colors, additions or deletions) will require review and approval by Community Development Staff, or the City Council. Failure to receive such approval shall invalidate the project and its related applications and documents. The project will be deemed terminated and the applicant will NOT be eligible for grant assistance.

On construction completion, including but not limited to clean-up, the applicant shall schedule a final walk-through with Community Development and Inspections Staff to determine compliance with the application and Letter of Commitment. Discrepancies between the approved project plans and actual construction will be noted, and a time frame for their correction will be established as necessary. All improvements must be in compliance with applicable City of Peoria building codes as determined by the City's Inspection Department and done in a professional manner.

Release of Funds

Grant funding will be provided upon a post-completion basis only. Applicant will certify, and Community Development Staff will make the final determination, as to whether the project has been completed according to the application and its approved plans. Applicant must provide verification, satisfactory to the City of Peoria's Community Development Department, of all project costs, including paid contractor invoices, contractors' affidavits and final mechanics' lien waivers from any and all contractors, subcontractors and/or suppliers, before façade grant funds can be disbursed. Applicant will be responsible for any costs equivalent to applicant's share of the costs or those beyond the approved Letter of Commitment amount and must show proof of payment at or before payment by the City.

Grant funds will be disbursed by a check payable to the applicant upon certification of completion and Community Development Staff verification that the work was completed as outlined in the application and its approved plan. Funds will not be disbursed on projects which are not in accordance with the Final Application, its approved plan and original documentation of all expenses submitted and approved by Community Development Staff and/or the City Council.

Displacement of Tenants

No financial assistance will be provided if the project involves the permanent and involuntary displacement of tenants unless the applicant agrees to provide financial assistance to the tenants at levels consistent with the Federal Relocation and Real Property Acquisition Act, as amended.

Disclaimer

The City of Peoria takes no responsibility as to the tax consequences of funds disbursed or forgiven pursuant to this Program. It is the sole responsibility of the applicant to determine consequences for receipt and/or subsequent forgiveness of these funds pursuant to the Internal Revenue Code or Illinois Revenue Code as currently in force or as periodically amended.

This Program is a reimbursement grant; applicant must pay any and all architect, contractors, suppliers, etc. before grant assistance is received from the City.

The City of Peoria expressly reserve the right to reject any or all applicants or to request more information from any and/or all applicants in its sole and exclusive discretion.

For more information, contact:

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